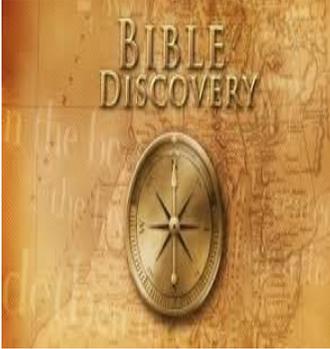


## Indebted to Christ's Merciful Example



Who do you follow? Who's your hero? For many it's Mom or Dad, a friend or perhaps it's a relative battling a severe illness who's always ready to give back, above and beyond. Maybe it's a sports figure, a fictional hero or a great leader such as Winston Churchill or Nelson Mandela. We all remember country singer Willie Nelson singing, "My Heroes have always been Cowboys". Tragically, the truth may be you've no one to follow, no one to imitate or look up to. So many personal stories include disappointment through abandonment, being let down, forsaken by those we've trusted. Did Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Saviour, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, come to mind as the hero for your life? I hope to encourage you to see Him as your hero; that you'll see how indebted you are to Him, choose Christ's merciful example and follow Him. The word, "HERO" is defined in the Meriam-Webster dictionary as "a person who's admired for great or brave actions or fine qualities" or simply as "a person who's greatly admired." Does that fit with your definition of who Jesus is in your life?

Certainly if you were amongst the crowd carrying palm branches and cheering Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday, you'd have seen Jesus as a hero – a superhero! He was the champion who healed the sick, comforted the broken-hearted; set the captives free. It was He who raised the dead back to life. But would you've been standing with Him come Good Friday? Would you've climbed Golgotha hill; wept as He hung dying in agony, feeling shame and sorrow? Some who'd cheered Him on Palm Sunday were the same who jeered, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him"; or were those who, at best, simply ran away in fear.

So why did Jesus do it? Why did He go through that charade with the throngs of people who didn't understand Him, didn't commit themselves to Him; didn't love Him? The key for you and me to Palm Sunday as He entered Jerusalem, as He faced His arrest and farce of a trial, as He began His journey to the cross is HE DIDN'T HAVE TO DO IT! No, it was a choice! Jesus chose to go through it all, even the cross; chose to obey His Heavenly Father's will; chose to die in our place as our Redeemer for our sins.

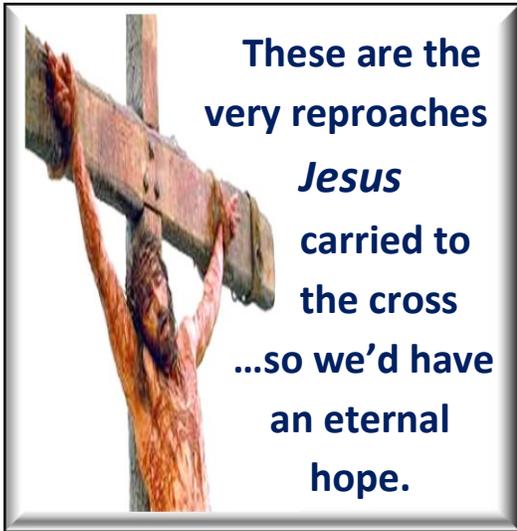
When the Apostle Paul wrote, "*We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves*", he could write it only because his Lord, our Saviour Jesus Christ, lived it! Jesus set the bar for bearing the weight of others, for caring with compassion passing human understanding, Where does that leave us today? Must we not be ready to encourage one another, lift each another in times of despair & trouble, spur each other on, help each one keep faith, remember our goal of following Jesus? If you consider yourself strong in the faith, the message is clear: don't use your strength to subdue your brothers and sisters in the faith who may be weaker; don't be submissive, gentle, kind-hearted; and again, if necessary. It's not the whims of the weak. Though I don't think this has been said, "*A genuine attempt to make them strong by stumbling to where they too can be lives on their backs, by puffing man-pleasers – no our goal's focused*

***Don't use strength to subdue (others) who may be weaker... be submissive, gentle, kind-hearted willing to lend a hand...***

**Jesus was the champion who healed the sick, comforted the broken-hearted; set the captives free...raised the dead back to life.**

against following trails of trails of societal norms. Sadly, all too often Christians, like the secular counterparts, find it easier to tear each other down instead of building each other up; this is Satan's devilish ploy to pursue our Christian hearts. In the power of God's Spirit and by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must resist

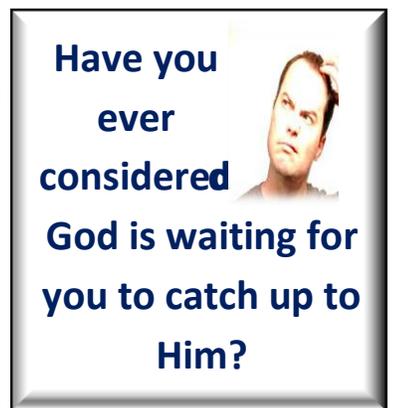
such tactics at all times. Jesus is ultimately the example of not pleasing oneself, of putting others first. When we consider Jesus took our abuse; suffered wrong for God's glory, fulfilling what was written in God's Word, it should encourage us in our own walk for Christ.



When we remember the reproaches we complain about receiving every day – many hitting the mark, causing pain and anger within us; many leading us to devise schemes of sweet mental revenge – we remember these are the very reproaches Jesus carried to the cross. Paul reminds us God's fulfilled promise in Christ was for our benefit so we'd have an eternal hope – an eternal outlook; so we'd do what's right even when difficult and unpopular. When we respond rightly to reproaches cast by the world against us for Jesus' sake, it lets them know there isn't anything they can do against this child of God whose eyes are fixed on Jesus. Sometimes our motivation seems more directed to make others feel bad as we make ourselves feel good. God would rather we be motivated by the hope we receive, even when suffering reproach, continually showing God's love is with us always!

The question for each of us then, is what is our response to such grace; what's our response to Christ's merciful example? May it be our joyous hearts! In fact, God's given us our marching orders hasn't He? *"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* First we recognize this is the work God's Holy Spirit must do in us. Without that our God, a God of patience, often seems to work too slowly for our liking as we're often in such a hurry. We're angered and frustrated at what we believe are delayed answers but God's delays are not His denials; His is a loving, purposeful response in every answer within His perfect timing. He answers every request – sometimes "Yes", sometimes "No", at times it's "wait a while, I've got something better"! But because it is God's answer, there's always the perfect answer.

We love God yet we're frustrated, resenting His patience in carrying out His plan. Boy if we wrote the script there'd have been no such gap between Adam and Eve being kicked out of the garden, and Christ's sacrificial gift on the cross redeeming us back to God. The good news is God is patient with both His plan and His fickle people. Peter reminds us, *"God is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* [2 Peter 3:9] Have you ever considered, God is waiting for you to catch up to Him; to change your viewpoint; accept heavenly thoughts? The goal of Christ, indeed His purpose, is glorifying the Father. We too must work out our salvation, having one mind, one body, one mouth – having unity in our thinking, in our words - being *"filled with love for others and joy and peace by the Holy Spirit"* so that we may glorify God!



If that humbles you today, then give thanks to Christ for His merciful example. We're called to follow that example. Charles Spurgeon states, *"Christ did not receive us because we were perfect, because He could see no fault in us, or because He hoped to gain somewhat at our hands. Ah, no! But, in loving condescension covering our faults, and seeking our good, He welcomed us to His heart; so, in the same way, and with the same purpose, let us receive one another."*

If we receive any comfort from God's Holy Word, if we receive any direction from Christ's awesome, merciful example, if we sense any debt for the cost of our salvation given so freely while we were alienated from our Heavenly Father, then let us be spurred on in the surest and sweetest of hopes, being like-minded according to the precepts of Christ, living according to His pattern and example, readily receiving this gift of



God. What a precious gift it is for which we must earnestly seek, so that as Christ, our Lord and King, encourages us by showing Himself as meek and lowly in spirit, the same disposition may mark our conduct as His servants, especially as those who are strong towards those weak in need of being encouraged and strengthened.

In all of this – in our actions and inactions, in our praise and in our fellowship, in our outreach and in our gathering, let it be that the great end to all we do is God and He glorified! Regardless of what other pursuit we may pursue, there's nothing surpasses the goal of giving God glory – not only inwardly, not only on the streets of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday but always and in all whom witness our lives demonstrating mutual love and kindness to one another and to our community. *Oh* that Christ's church would be so indebted to His merciful example she would forsake all other loves and cling to Him only and always. Amen!

To discuss these thoughts or to ask any questions as you journey following the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, give us a call or let us know how you're doing by sending us an email. We'd love to hear from you.

***Blessings***

*Pastor Dave*

